

ANALYSIS OF SELECTED  
SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHING METHODS

by

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## INTRODUCTION

"The study of history, as practiced in the American educational scheme, has long been regarded as one of the most repulsive and fruitless of subjects."<sup>1</sup> Criticism of the teaching of the social studies actually goes back as far as Plato and Plutarch. One of the first thinkers to attack the method of teaching in the social studies was John Locke, who thought that geography and chronology should go hand in hand. Rousseau criticized the teaching of history of his time, finding very little difference between histories and romances.<sup>2</sup> The problem of effective methods in the teaching of the social studies is then not a new subject.

Since World War II several new developments have made their impact on the teaching field as a whole. Broadhead has divided these post-war developments into the univalent, or those ideas on which there is general agreement, and the ambivalent, over which there is substantial public disagreement.<sup>3</sup>

The univalent developments include the impact of child growth and the development movements, the increased use of a variety of resources, such as audio-visual aids, community resources, and the emphasis on citizenship education, inter-group education and contemporary affairs. The ambivalent developments involve the teaching-learning process, methods of inquiry, the freedom of teaching, patterns of

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<sup>1</sup>G. D. Lillibridge, "History in the Public Schools," Social Education, 22:110, March, 1958.

<sup>2</sup>Russell L. Hamm, "Criticism and the Social Studies," Social Education, 22:350-352, November, 1958.

<sup>3</sup>Russell H. Broadhead and Lewis W. Burnett, "Areas of Change and Contravention," Improving the Social Studies Curriculum, Ruth Ellsworth and Ole Sand, editors (Washington D.C.: The National Council for the Social Studies, 1955), pp. 16-58.

curricular organization, and school-community relations. A study of the problems and methods of teaching in the social studies must be viewed against the background of these post-war trends which are evident in all fields of teaching.

### Purpose of the Study

The purposes of this study were to (1) analyze some of the problems which exist in the present method of teaching the social studies; (2) to report on selected studies which have been made concerning social studies teaching methods; and (3) to present methods which have been suggested for the improvement of teaching in the area of social studies.

### Procedure

To begin this study an intensive investigation of the pertinent literature contained in the Kansas State University library was conducted. The ensuing discussion treats (1) deficiencies in the present social studies program, (2) studies which have been made on teaching methods used in the social studies, and (3) suggested methods for improving the teaching of social studies.

### Limitations of the Study

The literature used in this study was limited with few exceptions to that written in the last ten years. The bibliography consists solely of periodical articles, with heavy emphasis being placed on the issues of Social Education and on the yearbooks of the National Council for the Social Studies. The articles chosen for consideration were limited to those which presented a new view in the area of social studies teaching methods.

### CRITICISMS OF THE PRESENT SOCIAL STUDIES PROGRAM

As recently as 1958 James B. Conant emphasized the importance of the deficient method of teaching in the social studies when he called for a "major breakthrough in the social studies, comparable to what has been achieved in physics in recent years."<sup>4</sup> A radical shift in emphasis in teaching social studies is needed, from the what of the social historian to the how of the social scientist. Social studies teaching has been operating at an incredibly low rate of efficiency. The conventional approach has been criticized over and over again, and yet it is still possible to say that in general, social studies in our high schools is not taught with the objectives of transfer and retention of ideas and concepts.

The problem of slowness of change is perhaps the greatest barrier to the realization of Conant's ideal. Support of this statement is given by Grambs who wrote that while the ideas of unit teaching, of audio-visual aids and of group work are not new, in practice they are still future innovations. Such methods have long been taken for granted by methods classes and by armchair educators; actually, they touch very few practicing teachers.<sup>5</sup>

Grambs presents further evidence of the slowness of change in teaching methods in the social studies by stating that the typical teacher is quite conservative. He tends almost inevitably to teach as he was taught. The secondary teacher is still close enough to his high school experience to remember the methods and procedures which were used. The greatest degree of change occurs at the lower grade level

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<sup>4</sup>Quoted in Stanley P. Wronski, "A Proposed Breakthrough for the Social Studies," Social Education, 23:215, May, 1959.

<sup>5</sup>Jean D. Grambs, "The Challenge to the Social Studies," Citizenship and a Free Society: Education for the Future, Franklin Patterson, editor (Washington D.C.: The National Council for the Social Studies, 1960), pp. 189-190.

because teachers are unable to remember their own experiences and are more amenable to learning new approaches.<sup>6</sup>

The idea of the teaching unit is old enough to have begun to take root and yet it remains mostly theoretical as the following quotation shows:

Perhaps there is no more profound or troublesome breach than the one that exists between the theory of unit teaching so widely espoused in the social studies and other content areas and the highly structured, constricting, uncreative use of textbooks which one may observe in so many social studies classrooms.

When the unit method is not utilized, the teacher usually resorts to a chronological or topical approach. Such methods, relying heavily on the assign-study-recite sequence give the impression that history is a body of facts which the historian verifies and the student memorizes while the teacher supervises.<sup>8</sup>

The idea of finishing the text, to which many teachers give paramount importance, is one of the biggest problems to be considered in the teaching of social studies. Carson states that the result of going through the text for the sake of covering all the material suggests that everything that happens to men is history and is worthy of the historian's attention.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Raymond H. Muesig, "Bridging the Gap Between Textbook Teaching and Unit Teaching," The Social Studies, 54:43, February, 1963/

<sup>8</sup> George Barr Carson, Jr., "New Viewpoints in History," New Viewpoints in the Social Studies, Roy A. Price, editor (Washington D.C.: The National Council for the Social Studies, 1958), pp. 22-23.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p.20.

The new approach in teaching social studies suggests greater emphasis on contemporary history. However, there has been no genuine revision in high school textbooks that is in keeping with this emphasis. Many textbooks seem to be more deserving of the title "annals" than "history" because of their wealth of detail and lack of interpretation and sense of perspective. For example, Carson states that many high school syllabi still reflect a fundamentally political approach, although the professional historian has been moving away from such an approach for more than a generation.<sup>10</sup>

The fact that the recent past is the most poorly taught period of history has been blamed by Wallace on (1) the textbook lag, (2) poorly developed time sense on the part of the teacher, and (3) the tension between the desire to teach thoroughly and the desire to cover the whole course.<sup>11</sup> Although the textbook lag is fundamental to this problem, as Carson mentioned, the use the teacher makes of the textbook is perhaps more important. The usual procedure in the high school American history course is to teach the most remote periods the most thoroughly, and then to skim the New Deal, World War II, the Korean War and the Cold War. If the purpose of education is to prepare young people to understand and deal with the world in which they live, adequate emphasis must be placed on the recent periods of history.

There is need for a changed focus in the traditional secondary school social studies course. Young people who have been made aware of the widening world ever since they entered school must learn to work more independently, to analyze problems more critically, and to arrive at value judgments more consciously.

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>11</sup>James M. Wallace, "Making History Relevant," *Social Education*, 26: 17-18, 24, January, 1962.



Hamilton recommends that every student should have a year's work in developing world understandings. United States history and a government course are no longer adequate preparation for our youth. They should have access to courses with more than a Western air which are not conducted by the world almanac approach.<sup>12</sup>

Cleveland likewise calls for a reevaluation of the relationship between the courses in American history and government and international affairs.<sup>13</sup> He calls it the task of education to help the student understand the relativity of American values. The teacher should blur the line between domestic affairs and foreign affairs, showing that international relations are internal affairs.

Many educators identify the major problem in the teaching of American history as the problem of repetition. Merideth states that a survey of texts for upper grades and senior high school use showed that a great majority of topics presented are the same. Most texts contain a general survey from colonial times to the present. "From this situation arises today's greatest single problem with regard to the content of American history courses in the schools, the problem of repetition at three or more grade levels."<sup>14</sup>

Cordier rephrases the problem of repetition, calling it the lack of vertical articulation.<sup>15</sup> He suggests that a three year program in American history be

<sup>12</sup>Dorothy W. Hamilton, "Educating Citizens for World Responsibilities, 1960-1980," *Patterson*, *op. cit.* p. 255.

<sup>13</sup>Harlan Cleveland, "The Real International World and the Academic Lag," *Price*, *op. cit.* pp. 183-187.

<sup>14</sup>Dorothy Merideth, "Changing Content of American History Courses," *The Study and Teaching of American History*, Richard E. Thurnfield, editor (Washington D.C.: The National Council for the Social Studies, 1946), p. 54.

<sup>15</sup>Ralph W. Cordier, "A Three-year Package on American Studies," *Social Education*, 26: 185-183, April, 1962.



Instituted which would require joint planning, frequent consultation, and a general cooperative effort between the teachers who are involved. The eighth grade program would concern itself with American history before 1876, with emphasis on the themes of industrialization, urbanization and the increasing role of government.

In this regard, Carson has called for a division of emphasis and content at the levels at which American history is taught.<sup>16</sup> He finds the unnecessary repetition due to the fact that no change is made in the teaching approach in the seventh grade and the twelfth grade. At all levels of study, American history courses give the most thorough examination to the colonial and revolutionary periods. A solution to this problem would be to study the period before 1789 in the middle grades, the building of a nation, from 1776-1876 in junior high, and the period of a democratic nation in a world setting in senior high. Such a division of emphasis has been repeatedly recommended by the American Historical Association, the Mississippi Valley Historical Association, and the National Council for the Social Studies.<sup>17</sup>

A criticism of social studies teaching frequently presented by lay writers is that such teaching fails to prepare youth for the internationally oriented world in which they live. Thus, many social studies courses seem to be preparing the student for the uncommon rather than the recurrent experience. In this respect, Bruen lists the following useful principles of content selection for world history

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<sup>16</sup>Carson, op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

courses: 18

- (1) Recent centuries are more important than the remote.
- (2) Cumulative chronological emphasis should devote approximately one-third of the time to each of these three periods: before 1500, between 1500 and 1850, and since 1850.
- (3) At every stage of study the ideas, institutions and precedents selected for emphasis should be those which are the roots from which the contemporary world societies have derived their form and character.

As early as 1946 Todd emphasized the need for education of the good world citizen:

All subjects in the social studies will justify their place in the educational program of the schools largely in terms of the contribution they can make to the development of the good citizen.<sup>19</sup>

The good world citizen may be defined as he who recognizes citizenship at every level -- family, state, national and world; he who believes in the equality of man under the law; he who is tolerant, understanding, and free from prejudice and discrimination; and he who believes in the potentialities of the intellect. It is the job of the high school social studies program to educate such a citizen. It is the problem of the teaching of social studies to find methods to achieve this end.

Another important criticism of social studies teaching is that history is still being taught as though we were in an age of literature rather than an age of science. In this connection, Bruun asserts that history must be taught to cultivate the history of science. It is a natural and integral part of the social studies. History teachers rely too heavily on literary works for their themes, material and point of view.

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<sup>18</sup> Geoffrey Bruun, "World History: the Problem of Context," Social Education, 16:3-5, January, 1952.

<sup>19</sup> Lewis Paul Todd, "Opportunities for American History," Thursfield, op. cit., p. 5.

It is necessary that "history textbooks written for students living in an age of science should give full emphasis to the origin and development of science."<sup>20</sup>

In this connection, Bruun states that while books are our richest and readiest source of information, they must not be leaned upon unequally. There was a time when our heritage from the Greek and Latin literatures formed the essential body of an education, but that time is passed. Civilization is now recognized to rest on twin foundations -- the humanities and the sciences. Bruun feels that there is a lack of stress on mathematics and music in high school social studies texts, two fields in which our civilization has attained preeminence.<sup>21</sup>

The social sciences profess allegiance to the scientific method; yet the methodology used in most social science classes completely ignores this fact. Wronski believes that the student can understand some of the processes involved in historical criticism; for instance, how the historian searches for materials, what kinds of sources constitute the raw materials for historical writing, and how materials are selected, classified, and synthesized.<sup>22</sup> It is the lack of this understanding that makes the study of history seem remote and far-removed from the student. He should be instructed in the process of historical research and criticism.

<sup>20</sup> Bruun, op. cit., pp. 4-7.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., pp. 6-7.

<sup>22</sup> Wronski, op. cit., p. 213.

Social studies teachers inevitably face the problem of creating an interest in their students for the subject. History is only unappealing because teachers have failed to suggest some meaning and purpose for its study which can make its value and practicality apparent to the student. Lillibridge blames much of this lack of appeal on the technique of working out from the near.<sup>23</sup> The organization of a twelve year curriculum on this logic involves many sacrifices, not only in subject matter but also in student interest. Many junior high school youth have all interest in social studies stifled by an unnecessarily long and detailed study of state and local history.

The study of state and local history, world history or American history should be based on real and significant problems. Williams finds that problems are generally conspicuous by their absence in high school history classes.<sup>24</sup> Instead, the student focuses his attention on mastering statements made in textbooks, on summarizing these statements in class, in papers, and on examinations. Such an approach ignores the fact that there must be wonder before there is learning: there must be questions before there are answers.

Problems should be central to the teaching of history. This is difficult, and perhaps impossible in some circumstances where the class size, the reading level of the students, and in some instances a general dislike for the subject serve to thwart the teacher's purpose. Many teachers find that the easiest procedure in such a situation is the chapter by chapter method of study, and examination over the factual material in the text.

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<sup>23</sup> Lillibridge, op. cit., p. 110.

<sup>24</sup> Jay Williams, "Problems and American History," Social Education, 17:266, October, 1953.

Mastery of the textbook presentation of the subject is considered an instructional approach to teaching. In such an approach, the subject being taught is considered for its value as a school subject. The aim of the teacher is the mastery of the subject. This approach generally works better with elective courses than with required courses, and better with older groups than with younger. Cummings criticizes the textbook instructional approach on the grounds that it involves too little interpretation by the teacher, too many assignments of the same material from different texts, and too many tests which emphasize memory rather than understanding.<sup>25</sup>

A final problem involved in the teaching of social studies is that of teacher preparation. Johnson states that teacher education must be more scholarly, more profound, and more comprehensive.<sup>26</sup> It is obvious that if all the criticisms which have been made of the teaching of social studies are to be met, the first step is to require adequate preparation of the teachers in more than their small, specific areas. In order to teach with appeal to students, in order to teach for world understanding and good citizenship, in order to teach critical thinking, the teacher himself must be well prepared in these areas.

Much of the foregoing implies that over the past twenty years social studies programs have evidenced little change. In this regard Kenworthy has summarized the reasons for the static level at which social studies programs have remained:<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Howard H. Cummings, "Psychological Influences on Social Studies Teaching," Price, op. cit., p. 209.

<sup>26</sup>Earl S. Johnson, "A View of the Future of the Social Studies," Price, op. cit., p. 200.

<sup>27</sup>Leonard L. Kenworthy, "Ferment in the Social Studies," Phi Delta Kappan, 64:16, October, 1962.

- (1) the lack of depth and the restrictive nature of the emphasis on neighborhood and community.
- (2) the repetition of the United States history.
- (3) the lack of time provided for comprehensive world history.
- (4) the failure to teach critical thinking.

#### ANALYSIS OF STUDIES OF METHODS EMPLOYED IN SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHING

The studies analyzed in this section are limited to those deemed worthy of consideration. Most of these studies were made to determine what methods teachers use, without showing whether or not they are effective. In this respect it should be noted that few studies have been made to determine the effectiveness of various social studies teaching methods. Those which have been made are often inconclusive and so subject to individual conditions that they cannot be generalized.

In 1951, Gross studied the methods employed in teaching social studies in one hundred California junior and senior high schools.<sup>28</sup> The problem under consideration was the failure of students to retain the basic facts and concepts of American history. A survey of the organization of American history courses in the one hundred schools studied revealed that the following approaches were used:

- 42% - chronological first semester, topical second semester
- 21% - straight chronological
- 16% - topical
- 11% - problems
- 6% - part of core programs
- 4% - projects and miscellaneous

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<sup>28</sup>Richard E. Gross, "Aims for American History in an Era of Crisis," Social Education, 17:257-260, October, 1953.



With respect to textbooks, Gross found that seventy-nine per cent of the teachers followed one text closely. Concerning the unit method of teaching, eighty-nine per cent of the teachers claimed to use the unit method, although analysis of the practices in the classroom and the large number of units covered revealed a lack of understanding of the term.

Of the methods used by the teachers under examination, sixty-four per cent used recitation frequently, while under fifty per cent used the following techniques frequently or occasionally: literary research, individual topics or reports, map work, individual assignments, notebooks, source reading, teacher-pupil planning, group projects, resource speakers and socio-drama.

The study concluded the following are what is wrong with American history:

- (1) the stigma of being a required course and the consequent large classes.
- (2) the lack of time given to individual assignments.
- (3) the overlap between junior high and senior high American history courses.
- (4) the lack of integration with courses offered at the same grade level.
- (5) the stifling of interest by the cataloging of names, dates and wars.
- (6) the teaching of facts as prime ends in themselves.
- (7) the failure to select materials and experiences which are important and functional.

Perhaps the most significant study of teaching methods which has yet been done is that made by Lux in 1962 to determine whether superior and non-superior teachers use the same teaching methods.<sup>29</sup> The study involved one hundred and forty-nine secondary school teachers in Nebraska. Lux began by having the selected teachers

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<sup>29</sup> John E. Lux, "A Comparison of Teaching Methods Used by Superior and Non-superior Teachers," The Social Studies, 53:171-174, October, 1962.



rated by their administrators. Outstanding or superior ratings were given to one hundred and fourteen teachers. They will be referred to as "rated." The remaining thirty-five teachers were rated as average or below average by their administrators. They will be called "unrated."

Lux's study yielded the data presented in Table 1 (page 15). He concluded that it was obvious from the data that the various methods and activities are used by both the rated and the unrated teachers, in varying degrees. The study does not present conclusive evidence for the superiority of the unit plan, of individual projects, reports and research papers, but it does show a pattern of the type of method used by superior teachers. Lux's final statement is that "one must suggest, and with good basis, that it is the teacher rather than the method that is important."<sup>30</sup>

In 1955, Stovall surveyed the research relevant to the teaching of social studies at the junior college level.<sup>31</sup> His report, which is undocumented, claims to be based on studies done in industrial and social psychology, studies done of junior college age youth, and experiments in the psychological laboratory, the armed forces and in the classroom. The conclusions of Stovall's survey are summarized as follows:

A. Interpersonal relationships in the classroom

1. The teacher can improve student-student relationships by
  - a. accepting each individual in the class. The students will tend to follow the pattern set by the teacher.
  - b. recognizing individual differences
  - c. providing leadership functions for each student.
2. The teacher can improve teacher-student relationships by

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<sup>30</sup>ibid., p. 173.

<sup>31</sup>Thomas F. Stovall, "What Research Says About Teaching General Education Social Studies," Junior College Journal, 25:531-536, May, 1955.

TABLE I

	Percentage of rated teachers	Percentage of unrated teachers
<b>The Organization and Presentation of Materials</b>		
Unit Plan	61.4	48.1
Textbook Chapter plan	26.9	42.3
<b>Type of Approach</b>		
Topical	48.3	38.5
Chronological	31.8	44.3
<b>Method of Presentation</b>		
Class discussion - teacher led	61.5	48.1
Recitation	28.0	15.4
Individual Projects and activities	15.3	1.9
Lecture	14.2	25.0
Student led discussions	11.0	7.7
<b>The Use of Group and Individual Activities</b>		
Panels	15.8	5.7
Debates	3.5	0.0
Committee	9.6	8.6
Mock Experiences	8.7	2.9
Dramatizations	22.6	8.6
Field Trips	6.1	2.9
Surveys	2.6	8.6
Community Projects	.9	2.9
<b>Individual Activities</b>		
Individual Projects	13.1	11.4
Oral Reports	30.8	34.3
Outside reading with report required	60.5	25.7
Required reading without report	20.1	0.0
Research papers	21.1	8.6
Making charts, maps	26.3	11.4
Making bulletin board displays	26.3	17.1

- a. being friendly and helpful
  - b. taking a personal interest in each student
  - c. adjusting assignments and expectations to meet individual differences
  - d. acting fairly and impartially
3. The teacher can improve teacher-group relationships by providing democratic leadership and cooperative planning.

#### B. Methods of Instruction

Lectures, group discussion and reading all have value as instructional methods; however, lecture has proved to be more effective than discussion for imparting information, while the discussion is better than lecture for the retention of knowledge, the improving of intellectual skills, and the changing of attitudes. The most effective lectures are those which are short and informal; the best discussions are done in groups of twelve or less and are most productive when the students have made specific preparation.

Reading appears to be more effective than lecture for the increasing of understanding of relatively difficult material, with students of average or above average ability.

Stovall's report showed that small group work has some advantages over individual instruction and the total class approach. It is particularly valuable for improving intellectual skills and democratic attitudes. The members of the small groups should be rotated for maximum effectiveness.

The research he reviewed showed that any projected material, film, or filmstrip, or use of the overhead projector is of definite value in promoting the learning of facts and changing attitudes. There is less investigation of the effect of projected materials on the improving of intellectual skills and on motivation, but there appears to be great potential value in this area.

There has been little research done on the effectiveness of recordings and of field trips, but that which has been done is favorable to their continued use.

An interesting study was done in 1951 at a summer session at Fresno State College Extension at Bakersfield College, California.<sup>32</sup> In a course entitled the Social Studies Curriculum, thirty-five social studies curricula were examined and two hundred and fifty teachers contacted for their opinion regarding the curriculum they used.

The study found that ninety-seven of the two hundred and fifty teachers seldom used or followed the prescribed social studies curriculum in their school or district. The reasons given for this lack of interest in the curriculum guides were that (1) the curriculum was not adapted to the interest and abilities of the children, and (2) it was not harmonious with community resources or with the texts.

Only one of the thirty-five curricula studied had an active curriculum committee to review and improve the curriculum to match changing community problems. Twenty-three of the curricula studied were judged to be out of date in the suggested use of materials and textbooks, and in the omission of local, national and world problems. Nineteen of the curricula lacked flexibility, and twenty-one had no correlation with science, language arts, music and art.

Although this study was done twelve years ago, current writers indicate that such lack of proper curriculum direction is still prevalent in less progressive school systems.

Wronski has made a survey to determine the extent to which social studies teachers use government publications.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>J. D. McAulay, "What Is Wrong with the Social Studies," Social Education, 16:377-378, December, 1952.

<sup>33</sup>Stanley P. Wronski, "Do Social Studies Teachers Use Government Publications?" Social Education, 15:115-116, March, 1951.

One thousand questionnaires were sent to three different groups during the year 1948-49. The groups were divided into (1) members of the National Council for the Social Studies, (2) members of various regional social studies councils, and (3) a select group of social studies teachers in the State of Minnesota. The median number of government publications used per teacher was six, five, and four, respectively for the three groups.

No rigid pattern was revealed concerning the relationship between the enrollment of the school and the use of government publications. The larger schools, with enrollments of over fifteen hundred used such publications most frequently. The lowest average number of government publications used was among schools with enrollments of less than one hundred.

Wronski found, surprisingly enough, that the smallest classes, of from fifteen to twenty students, used the fewest government publications. The classes of average size, of from twenty to thirty, used the most publications. Teachers who taught five social studies classes a day used more government publications than teachers with fewer or with more than five classes. Teachers who held only bachelors degrees used fewer government publications than did teachers with additional work.

The item most clearly revealed in the survey was the relationship between school expenditure and the use of government publications. The more the schools expend for the use of supplementary material, the more such material is used.

A study of the effectiveness of college methods courses in the social studies teaching at the elementary level, which is probably also representative of secondary methods courses was conducted by McAulay in 1960. The study was centered around sixty-four teachers who had completed their first year of teaching in grades one through six.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>J. D. McAulay, "Weakness In the Social Studies Methods Courses," *Education*, 81:245-246, December, 1960.

Of the sixty-four teachers in the study, twenty-seven had never demonstrated the idea of a group project or committee work. Fifteen of these teachers had never observed the unit method after one year of teaching, twenty-two did not know how to introduce a unit, thirty-three wanted to know how to carry out a unit, and twenty-five had constructed practice units but had never put one into practice.

This study is significant, being only three years old, since it gives conclusive evidence to the numerous criticisms that many of the improved methods of teaching in the social studies are still merely theory. Methods courses should play a major role in giving the prospective teacher the technique and procedures for carrying out the methods they are advocating.

The studies which have been done in the last few years on teaching methods in the social studies tend to support the unit plan and individually oriented projects as superior teaching methods. The studies also show that the majority of teachers probably are not using the new methods, nor are they using available material to supplement their teaching procedures.

### IMPROVED TEACHING METHODS IN THE SOCIAL STUDIES

Citizenship education has long been accepted as one of the basic tasks of American schools.... This preparation of persons able to think intelligently, or critically, about decisions concerning societal issues has been a special concern of those working with the social studies curriculum.<sup>35</sup>

With the above quotation, Shaver has stated the overwhelming task confronting the teacher of the social studies. It is the purpose of this section to present some approaches concerning how such an education can be achieved.

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<sup>35</sup> James P. Shaver, "Educational Research and Instruction for Critical Thinking," Social Education, 26:13-16, January, 1962.



### Suggested Approaches

A fundamental task in the social studies is to help students determine whether there is any warrant for holding certain beliefs. Metcalf suggests that it is the task of the reflective teacher to provide such verification of belief.<sup>36</sup> He feels that the traditional course in methods of teaching will have to give more attention than it has in the past to the logical foundations of method.

Verification of belief in the classroom must begin with the classification of statements as analytic, synthetic, or evaluative, and proceed accordingly. Such classification of statements is very useful. Statements of belief, of knowledge, and of opinion should be identified as such. A teacher cannot ask a student for evidence in support of an analytical statement. The teacher can teach logical thinking by asking the student what else must be true if the statement is true.

The reflective teacher cannot treat all statements alike.

Courses in history that fail to emphasize the study of such statements, what they mean and whether they are true, cannot back up the teacher's claim that an understanding of history clarifies present-day problems.<sup>37</sup>

For instance, most popular textbooks contain contingent singular content, making such statements as the examples Metcalf uses.

The Roosevelt Corollary was first put into effect in Santo Domingo.

World War II did not inspire the enthusiasm and idealism of either the War Between the States or World War I.

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<sup>36</sup> Lawrence E. Metcalf, "The Reflective Teacher," Phi Delta Kappan, 64:17-21, October, 1962.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 19.



The usefulness of such content is reduced to a minimum if teachers require that it be learned apart from and prior to reflection. Teachers must teach facts in their relationship to concepts and generalizations if they expect students to grow in their understanding of social phenomena.

The explanations offered by high school social studies textbooks are usually incomplete and require some filling in. Incomplete explanations are given which usually imply general law. A typical example used by Metcalf is this: "Pilgrims came to the New World to escape religious persecution." Many students will commit this type of statement to memory as an item of information.

The need for generalization in the teaching of social studies is emphasized by Dimond. He recognizes the role of generalization in social studies as (1) to provide a framework around which facts can be acquired and organized, and (2) to provide opportunity to test the truth or falsity of generalizations.<sup>38</sup>

Dimond proposes a facts-generalization system, or a process of helping pupils to acquire facts, to see their relationships, and to arrive at conclusions. The value of this system can be seen in the fact that:<sup>39</sup>

- (1) Learning remains piecemeal unless pupils generalize from acquired facts.
- (2) Forgetting of facts is more rapid than the forgetting of generalizations.
- (3) Having a generalization in mind contributes to the acquisition of useful facts.

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<sup>38</sup>Stanley E. Dimond, "The Role of Generalization in Teaching the Social Studies," *Social Education*, 22:232-234, May, 1958.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 232.

Instead of calling upon the class to supply the facts in a given assignment, Dimond suggests that the teacher review the facts for the class and then let the class try to put the facts to use. A generalization should also be viewed as a tentative hypothesis which is held until new evidence requires modification of the hypothesis.

A causal approach to the study of history has been developed by the Preventive Psychiatry Program of the State University of Iowa.<sup>40</sup> The history classroom presents an ideal situation involving people generally quite far removed from the child's experience, allowing him to gain practice in applying causal thinking in an atmosphere less emotionally charged than most direct situations. "But the content of American history, as now taught generally, does not automatically lend itself to this process, particularly because it often avoids discussing why something happened." <sup>41</sup>

The omission of the why in social studies classes may be due to the desire to teach and include in textbooks only generally accepted facts. For instance, a rational investigation of causes in history is often replaced by a pseudo-causal approach. Books and teachers tend to identify certain characters as good-guys and bad-guys, making arbitrary moral judgements to explain historical motivation.

Dyckstra believes that "a causal approach is always far more compatible with a scholarly presentation of American history than a non-causal or pseudo-causal approach."<sup>42</sup> He basls his approach on the following logic:

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<sup>40</sup> Robert Dyckstra, "Preventative Psychology and the Teaching of History, The Social Studies, 54:47-53, February, 1963.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 50

- (1) History is the record of change.
- (2) Emphasis should be placed on the causes of a given change.
- (3) Historical events (aside from natural phenomena) were caused by human activity.
- (4) Definite conclusions about causes of behavior are impossible.
- (5) Most changes involve conflict. The area of conflicting group attitudes appears to be the most fruitful area of analysis in considering behavior underlying an historical event.
- (6) Hypothetical speculation is the proper analytical method of approaching ultimate causation.
- (7) Such an analysis which proposes to be objective must evolve from a scientific willingness to be disinterested.
- (8) Conclusions about the causes of behavior underlying historical changes must remain tentative and not become moral judgments.

In the classroom, the student should be encouraged to place himself in the place of the historical persons he is studying. The long range objective of the causal approach is to teach open-mindedness. If the causal orientation has been successfully implanted in the student, he will presumably be more receptive to additional data and to new hypotheses at later stages of his education.

In the area of the social studies, questions concerning cultural values and individualism inevitably arise. The dilemma becomes the need for diversity and variation which promotes freedom of choice and the need to control conflict and promote societal cohesion. Oliver suggests an approach to citizenship education which provides for both diversity and conformity in the American value system.<sup>43</sup>

At the symbolic level, the student should be taught only to verbalize the general values in the American creed, and to identify with the nation. At the objective level, he should be taught to think based on reasoned self interest, and develop individual understanding for the system of government and law under which he lives.

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<sup>43</sup>Donald W. Oliver, "Educating Citizens for Responsible Individualism, 1960-1980," in Patterson, *op. cit.*, pp. 203.

Such an approach allows for expression of individual values and yet teaches minimal conformity to certain areas of belief which foster social cohesion.

Oliver calls his system a jurisprudential curriculum, which would focus on the earnest use of free speech and open debate. He suggests the use of the narrative text as historical background and supporting evidence, of drill materials or questions based on the text, of illustrative cases based on concrete and factual stories, of dilemma cases which show conflict within the unit, of argumentative dialogues and persuasive documents for the analysis of material, of the case play for the presentation of arguments, and of briefs, prepared by each individual student in which he sets forth his own commitment and supports it.

More recently, in 1961 Brown discussed the improvement of teaching methods at the junior high level beginning with the following premises:<sup>44</sup>

- (1) The twelve to fifteen year old has learned to dislike social studies.
- (2) The junior high student retains a very small fraction of the data he learns.
- (3) The amount and length of retention can be increased by certain factors, among which are the interest of the pupil, the enthusiasm of the teacher, the depth of content offered, and the amount of repetition.

The selection process as mentioned earlier is one of the greatest problems in the teaching of the social studies. Brown suggests that selection should be made in terms of the immediate goals of the student, in terms of sheer volume, and in terms of the interest producing quality of the data. Seldom does anyone become interested in a subject when the approach to it is a mere skimming of the surface. Thus, teachers should realize that some material must be eliminated completely.

Brown cited stimulation as a second factor necessary for effective teaching.

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<sup>44</sup> Ralph Adams Brown, "Improving Instruction in Junior High School Social Studies," Social Education, 25:139-142, March, 1961.

In this respect he writes that stimulation may come through the depth of the material which is offered, through the teacher's own curiosity and drive to keep informed, and through the level of teacher expectation.<sup>45</sup>

A final problem which the social studies teacher faces is the provision of "an effective learning environment where pupils can study man, society, and man's relationships with nature and society. It is a problem that persistently challenges even the skillful and imaginative teacher, for it is never fully or permanently solved."<sup>46</sup>

Fraser lists three factors as important in the creation of an effective learning environment in the social studies class: the social climate or atmosphere in the classroom, the physical aspects of the classroom, and the extension of the social studies classroom. He places special emphasis on the atmosphere of the classroom, which may range from an authoritarian climate to a democratic atmosphere.

The democratic classroom is characterized by flexible patterns of interaction among group members. The teacher is recognized as the group leader, but plans are made and carried out cooperatively. The standards of achievement are set up in relation to the maturity and ability of the group. Such an atmosphere can be created by a teacher to help provide an effective learning environment.

### Suggested Methods

There is a strange dilemma between the curricular areas of the social studies

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Dorothy McClure Fraser, "The Social Studies Classroom," The Teacher of the Social Studies, Jack Allen, editor (Washington D. C.: The National Council for the Social Studies, 1952), pp. 113-159.

and reading."<sup>47</sup> It is impossible for a student to be successful in social studies without the skill of reading. McAuley recognizes that most social studies classes are very dependent on their text, which may be and often is too difficult for the poor reader. Teachers could help overcome this difficulty by using several texts with slightly different reading levels. The prescribed text might be used only to introduce or conclude a unit, as source material. Other texts could be assigned to correspond with varying reading levels and interests.

McAuley also suggests that teachers supplement the text by purchasing paperback fiction and nonfiction at the level of the reading ability of the students. Many current materials are excellent sources and should not be overlooked. Special attention should be given to the slow and non-comprehensive readers, whose whole interest in history may be stifled by the level of reading to which they are assigned.

The idea of combining history and literature is not new. Many core curriculums at the junior high level have successfully utilized the idea and it need not be overlooked in upper level history courses. In this connection, Gall describes an experiment in teaching American history through novels done at the Long Island City High School, New York.<sup>48</sup> At the start of each unit of study, the students were given a list of suggested books, including plays and biographies. They were given guides to use while reading, to help correlate the literature with the history unit under consideration. Class time was given for oral reports made on the outside reading.

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<sup>47</sup> J. D. McAuley, "The Social Studies Dependent on Reading," Education, 82:87, October, 1961.

<sup>48</sup> Morris Gall, "Teaching American History Through Novels," Social Education, 17:156-158, April, 1953.



The by-products of this experiment in teaching American history through novels were recorded as:

- (1) the enjoyment gained from reading history
- (2) the habit of buying and owning books
- (3) the value of oral reporting
- (4) the integration and correlation with English
- (5) the less teacher dominated learning situation

A similar experiment was undertaken at the Taylor Allderdice High School in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.<sup>49</sup> In this experiment synthesis of American history and American literature was attempted at the eleventh grade level. While studying the colonial period, the class as a whole read such works as Arthur Miller's The Crucible and Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter. The study of the Progressive Era lent itself to the study of Ellis' How the Other Half Lives, Sinclair Lewis' Main Street, and a series of American dramas, including Our Town, All My Sons, The Glass Menagerie and The Hairy Ape. In this experiment the class read and studied the literature together, as is done in a regular English class. The experiment was rated as highly successful and worthy of consideration by other school systems.

Ralph Brown has written several articles on the value of using biography in the social studies.<sup>50</sup> Brown feels that while young people are at the impressionable period, good biography can do much to help them enjoy worthwhile and satisfying experiences. The use of biographies in the social studies is considered valuable

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<sup>49</sup> Edwin Fenton and Lois Josephs, "An Experiment in Synthesis," The Clearing House, 36:43-50. September, 1961.

<sup>50</sup> Ralph A. Brown, "Biography in the Social Studies: The Values of Biography," Social Education, 18:67-70, February, 1954.



because they vitalize the study of history, they enrich and make more complete the content of history, they help to identify and develop democratic values, and they contribute to the personality development of the student.

The value of using local biography should also be considered by the teacher who is trying to create an interest in his subject.<sup>51</sup> By starting with a local problem which the students understand, interest may be generated which can then be generalized to the real subject at hand. The student can gain a genuine understanding of the development of institutions, of the relation of the past and the present, and develop an awareness of social change and social needs through the study of local situations. In addition, local biography can provide historical continuity by showing contrast or similarity between present and past.

Teaching the techniques of research is one of the major problems facing the social studies teacher. McGoldrick suggests the following steps in teaching research techniques:<sup>52</sup>

- (1) Begin with the assigned textbook. Work with textbook problems that can be used to teach the basic research skills.
- (2) Assign a series of research projects that begin with a simple non-textbook task.
- (3) Make a research assignment which involves reading two or more complete books on a subject.

Walker suggests that three research reports be made by each student during a year course, with eight to ten days devoted to each report. The first day would involve the instruction and demonstration of the assignment. Three days would be spent in the

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<sup>51</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "Local Biography Provides Historical Continuity," Social Education, 16:151-161, April, 1952.

<sup>52</sup> James H. McGoldrick, "Teaching Research Techniques in the Social Studies," The Social Studies, 54:15-17, January, 1963.

library under supervision, followed by a day of supervised preparation in the classroom. The final three or four days would be devoted to oral presentation in class.

To aid the student in the project the teacher would supply a list of topics, and require outlines and bibliographies in place of a written report. Each oral report would last from five to ten minutes. The teacher would provide each student with a detailed, written analysis of his report. The values of such a program accrue from the opportunities for improvement which are allowed the student, and the time which the teacher saves by not having to grade written reports.

A final idea involving the research paper is that of a class history paper.<sup>53</sup> In this regard, the procedure which Fried suggests involves the election of an editorial committee to supervise and edit the research. Selection of a topic can be accomplished by simultaneously skimming the text and giving consideration to the complexity of the subject and the availability of material. The method used in such a paper would be journalistic, the idea being to recreate experiences in an original manner. Use would be made of short stories and articles written during the period under consideration in order to bring about immersion in the period of the topic.

The expense of the publication of the paper can be met by bake sales and the actual sale of the paper. The value of such a project is seen in the fact that it promotes creativity and cooperation, it develops library skills, and it promotes learning by breaking the formal atmosphere of the class.

A project of original research was carried out in Michigan in 1954 by a junior high class with the cooperation of the local and state historical societies. The class located sites of early villages on maps of metropolitan Detroit, wrote the township

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<sup>53</sup> Laurence M. Fried, "Children Enjoy Research," Social Education, 18:255-256, October, 1954.

clerks for information, and then selected a village site on which to do their research. They took pictures of existing historical buildings, made detailed lists of the building conditions, and interviewed the longtime residents.

Such a project provided for individual differences. Some students did the writing, some did the visiting, some did the illustrations and the photography. The young people developed poise in facing different situations, and leadership qualities were fostered.

Field trips are the logical way to make use of the community and foster community life in the classroom. Mewha calls the field trip the most important device so far developed for studying community resources.<sup>54</sup> Although the case for using the community environment as the basis of social studies teaching theoretically has been won, little has been done to put it into practice. Apparently, then, many teachers lack an understanding of how to use community resources in teaching social studies.

Mewha suggests that a program be undertaken which would be deeper and more extensive than one trip or a series of trips. To begin with, the community should be studied to develop an interest in the people and a concern for their problems. The class can study the background of community problems and see what can be done about them.

Community problems which could be of interest to the junior high age group might include safety going to and from school, traffic congestion, the need for recreational facilities, or the equality of service in all parts of town. The junior high age group might even study why the town grew, making maps of natural resources and mapping out real estate and new housing developments. A master map can be kept in the

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<sup>54</sup>Alan P. Mewha, "Making Use of the Community," Social Education, 16:28-30, January, 1952.

classroom, with groups of students assigned to different areas of the city. Such a project can give the student the feeling that he has a part in solving community problems, and that school is not a separate institution.

Teaching current events is one of the most difficult tasks which the social studies teacher faces. Some students seem to be naturally interested in studying current events, while others can scarcely be motivated at all. Rich has done a study of two seventh grade classes of twenty-five students each, to see whether there are personal characteristics which can be identified in the apathetic current events students.<sup>55</sup>

Rich delineated an interest group and an apathetic group and administered a questionnaire to both groups. He found that both groups had equal access to communication media: the difference between the groups lay in what they did with their time. The interested group had a larger scope of interest, which was reflected in a wider range of hobbies, in more and greater variety of reading, in membership in more organizations, and the attendance of more meetings. The home environment of the interested group was one in which the students overheard their parents discussing news events, and in which they discussed current events with their parents.

Rich dealt with the divided interest in his classroom directly by scheduling personal conferences with the parents of the apathetic group to explain the situation to the parents. Rich reports that he did notice changes in the attitude of some of these students over a period of time. Another observation made was that the apathetic group often needed remedial work in reading. Rich discovered that certain types and levels of new items had at least some appeal for the apathetic student, and careful

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<sup>55</sup> John Martin Rich, "Creating Interest in Current Events," The Social Studies, 53:167-168, October, 1962.

selection to meet individual differences helped combat student lack of interest in the reading of current events.

Lichtenberg has suggested a procedure for encouraging students to read a variety of newspaper articles.<sup>56</sup> Students are required to read such articles in keeping with the area of the unit which is in progress. The students are to clip a designated number of appropriate articles from the paper and underline the three most important sentences in each article. In another color they underline the key words, which they must be able to define. From the total number of articles, the students select four which they summarize in less than one hundred words, with no quotations.

After the articles are summarized, each student must state in question form a problem which is suggested by each article. The student then discusses the significance of the problem based on authority and logic. He must indicate two alternative solutions to the problem, choose one, and give his reasons for supporting it. Finally, the student will show at least two examples of slant, bias or exaggeration used by the author or someone the author quotes. The students are instructed to choose articles for the final summary which lend themselves to this type of analysis.

Lichtenberg believes that such an approach will teach the student to think in terms of problems and of solving problems. He will learn to look for problems while he is reading, he will learn to analyze solutions, and he will be forced to draw his own conclusions.

In teaching current events, or any other phase of the social studies, the use of audio-visual aids has long been accepted as a valuable device. Faris discusses an improved method of film utilization, which he calls Discussion 66. The steps of the

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<sup>56</sup> Marvin Lichtenberg, "Utilizing Newspapers in Social Studies," The Journal of Educational Sociology, 35:171-174, October, 1961.



discussion are as follows:

- (1) The class is divided into small groups of approximately six each.
- (2) The groups elect a chairman and a recorder.
- (3) The chairman allows each member of the group to state his ideas on the problem at hand.
- (4) The recorder reads the entire list of suggestions, opens the group to discussion, and the group then chooses the two or three best solutions.
- (5) After six minutes, the class is called back to order and the teacher lists the best solutions from each group on the blackboard. They are ranked according to the number of groups that proposed them.
- (6) The teacher then introduces a film which presents another suggested solution to the problem.
- (7) The teacher leads a discussion following the film, coordinating the thinking of the groups and the film.<sup>57</sup>

This method has the advantage of allowing the students to think of solutions for themselves after analyzing a problem. The film is introduced as source material and is worked into the discussion which the class has previously started. Such a method prevents the isolated presentation of a film. It allows the student to generalize the information the class has been discussing with that presented in the film.

An interesting and progressive method for enhancing the study of the social studies at the high school level has been tried at the Central High School in Chattanooga, Tennessee.<sup>58</sup> The method is called the conference method, and requires much cooperative planning between teacher and pupils, plus full utilization of community resources.

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<sup>57</sup> Gene Farris, "Improve Your Teaching Effectiveness," The Social Studies, 53:174-176, October, 1962.

<sup>58</sup> J. Pope Dyer, "The Conference Method in Social Studies Instruction," The Social Studies, 53:142-143, April, 1962.

To plan the conference, a committee of twelve students is chosen, representing the four social studies classes involved. The representatives are to secure suggestions for the conference topic from the members of their respective classes. Topics such as marriage, safety, citizenship and mental health would be suitable for high school conferences.

The committee proposes a topic for the conference and suggests names of persons in the community who could make outstanding contributions. The conference on mental health which was done in Chattanooga chose the Director of Mental Health for the State of Tennessee as their opening speaker. They then divided the four hundred participating students into one-hour work groups led by well known psychologists or psychiatrists. The benefits of the conference were summarized as follows:

- (1) Students are taught leadership, insight, evaluation and organization.
- (2) Students are able to secure information from experts that could not be given them by the instructor.
- (3) Experts gladly volunteer to assist when youth show so much interest.
- (4) Parents learn more about the school program through the publicity and discussion of the conference.
- (5) Newspapers are eager to secure the stories and are liberal with space.

Another progressive experiment concerning teaching methods was conducted by two teachers of eleventh grade American history at Hanover High School, Hanover, New Hampshire. The purpose of the experiment was to present the students with many novel teaching situations and to evaluate the desirability of incorporating some, or all of these procedures into the history curriculum.

The unit employed in this experiment was oriented in terms of direct preparation for college, and only students planning to enter college were included. The students were prepared by large-group lectures, given practice in note taking, doing research



papers, and taking essay exams. The unit chosen for the experiment was the Westward Movement, 1819-1870.

The students in the experiment heard six lecturers, three of whom were Dartmouth professors. The lectures were given in the school library, and the notes which the students took were collected and evaluated. The students prepared for the lectures by reading in the text and in material that was reserved for them in the school library. Following the lectures, small discussion groups were led by high school staff and Dartmouth students.

The students then wrote a research paper on some student-selected aspect of the general topic. Each student was assigned to the school library for four periods of supervised research. During the course of the unit the students were to inspect and answer a questionnaire on a map exhibit provided by a local historical society. The culminating activity was a ninety minute essay exam which was graded for both historical accuracy and English usage. Lay readers were used to grade the tests and the research papers. Objective criteria which were known in advance by the students were employed in grading the essays.

The experiment was evaluated by Goodwin as follows:

- (1) Crucial to the success of the unit was careful and detailed planning. Over forty pages of instruction was distributed to the participants. The unit definitely increased teacher responsibility and work.
- (2) Essential to such a unit is a high degree of cooperation.
- (3) The novelty of the unit was a major factor in ensuring student interest. Such procedure should therefore be used sparingly and wisely.
- (4) The amount of time spent on the unit was an important factor. The seventeen days which were used seemed to be adequate time without losing student interest.

- (5) The procedures were as successful with poor students as with good students.
- (6) Few students felt any loss as a result of the unit, although the poorer students felt they had not gained as much factual information as they did with regular procedure. Many good students felt a real gain was made in understanding the material.

The procedures employed in this experiment were rated in this order: the research paper was rated the most valuable, the essay test second in value, and the lecture series was rated third. It should be noted that the small group discussions were rated as unsuccessful. The experiment, however, is recommended to other school systems in varied forms.

A final procedure which must be mentioned in a discussion of improved teaching methods in the social studies is that of evaluation. Tests should reflect the same objectives that guided the instruction of a unit. Too often, however, tests are after thoughts, assembled to give some tangible basis for grading. They may give a disproportionate emphasis on recall of miscellaneous and unrelated information. "Since students tend to regard tests as indicators of what the teacher wants them to learn, it is not surprising that they spend their time on the indiscriminate memorization of such information."<sup>59</sup>

Kurfman suggests that in preparing a test the teacher begin with the formulation of the major concepts and relationships which he has attempted to communicate during the course of the unit. The ability of the student to recall factual data, and relationships presented in the same form as the teacher presented them does not indicate that understanding is present. "Questions which test for understanding must present a situation somewhat unique for the student so that he is called upon to stop and reflect before responding."<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Dana G. Kurfman, "Teacher-Made Tests in the Social Studies," Educational Leadership, 20:16-19, October, 1962.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., pp. 16-17.

To test for real understanding of principles, a teacher may use questions involving graphs, cartoons, charts, maps or quotations. Questions which require comparison, or ask the relative significance of facts require the student to do more than memorize textbook facts. Kurfman suggests that the teacher increase the proportion of questions which require understanding rather than recall responses. Kurfman also suggested that the teacher carefully review his test to assure clarity and correctness.

It seems obvious that no one teaching method will be a success with every teacher or with every group at all times. Methods have unusual and different characteristics. They cannot be a panacea for all instructional aids. On the other hand, they cannot be ignored as too mechanical to be worth consideration. The teacher who becomes so preoccupied with his subject matter that he does not give adequate consideration to his method of presentation will probably fail to develop the understanding which he seeks to give his students.

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purposes of this study were to (1) analyze some of the problems which exist in the present method of teaching the social studies; (2) to report on selected studies which have been made concerning social studies teaching methods; and (3) to present methods which have been suggested for the improvement of teaching in the area of social studies.

In the past ten years, teaching in the social studies has been criticized strongly for its slowness of change, its reluctance to practice the improved methods which have long been taken for granted by methods classes, its survey approach rather than teaching understanding of principles, its lack of emphasis on contemporary history, and the lack of vertical articulation in American history.

Other criticisms which have been made of social studies teaching methods include the lack of emphasis on science, the overemphasis on state and local history, the absence of the problems approach, and inadequate teacher preparation.

Few studies have been conducted to determine the effectiveness of social studies teaching methods. Those which have been made tend to show that the improved teaching methods, such as the unit plan, individually oriented projects and research work are more effective than the conventional methods. The studies also show that the majority of teachers are not as yet using these new methods, nor are they using all the material that is available to supplement their teaching.

There is no research to show which teaching methods are definitely the most effective. Situations vary so much that it would be impossible to prescribe a pattern of instructional procedures which would be best in all circumstances. It will always be up to the individual teacher to determine which method will produce the best results in each classroom situation.

In this regard, teachers should be aware of improved methods and approaches which have been tried in the classroom, as well as those which have yet to be tried. Several approaches have been suggested for the improvement of teaching in the social studies. The approach of the reflective teacher is to provide the verification of belief for statements made in the textbook and in the classroom. Generalization of facts is a means whereby the teacher can provide a meaningful framework around which to organize other material. The causal approach helps the student understand the why as well as the what of history. The selection of material is another means whereby the teacher can foster student interest and understanding by making the selection in terms of the immediate goals of the students and the interest producing quality of the data.

Although the methods which teachers use will remain an individual matter, there are several suggestions for improvement that will be beneficial to all teachers. For instance, teachers should recognize the relationship between reading ability and studying social studies by providing reading to match the ability of the student. The text material can be supplemented by the use of novels and biographies to increase both interest and understanding.

Teachers can make use of community resources to help the students gain an understanding of the development of institutions, of the relation of the past and the present, and become aware of social change and social needs through the study of local situations. Community problems can be studied, a local project undertaken, or a field trip used to promote community awareness.

Teachers can improve the use of the research paper by taking time to explain and let the students experiment with the techniques of research. Short assignments of a research nature can introduce the student to research procedures, to be followed by more difficult tasks, or several short research assignments can be made during the course of a year to allow for improvement. The class might even undertake a class history paper, done in a journalistic style in order to recreate experiences in an original manner.

The teaching of current events can be improved by recognizing the possible division of interest within a class and assigning the apathetic student news items of the type and level which would have some appeal for him. Students can be encouraged to read a variety of articles by keeping notebooks of articles which they clip, summarize and analyze.

Several variations of the regular teaching methods have been successfully tried in high schools. For example, the conference which is planned and carried out by

several social studies classes, a unit done in conjunction with local college professors for students planning a college career, a synthesized class of American history and American literature, and a community project done in cooperation with the local and state historical societies which involved the study of an original town site.

This study does not include all of the improved teaching methods suggested for use in social studies classes. However, it was evident from the study that one basic teaching principle embodies all the methods reported. The underlying principle is that students will not learn to be good world citizens, to relate community and national problems, to see a relationship between past and present, and to think critically as by-products of the study of the usual social studies program. Such concepts must be taught directly by the teacher, by creating learning situations which are as similar as possible to those in which the students are to use their competencies.

It may be concluded that many of the criticisms which have been made of the teaching of social studies in the last decade are still very real problems. There is no research which can conclusively designate one teaching method as more effective than another method. It should be noted, however, that many of the criticisms which have been laid upon the teaching of social studies can be met with the use of some of the new, creative, imaginative methods which have been suggested for use in the social studies. It is apparent that the new horizons for the social studies are in the methods of teaching.



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**ANALYSIS OF SELECTED  
SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHING METHODS**

by

**JANET DINKLAGE LEICK**

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**AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT**

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requirements for the degree

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Approved by:

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**Major Professor**

The purposes of this study were to (1) analyze some of the problems which exist in the present method of teaching the social studies; (2) to report on selected studies which have been made concerning social studies teaching methods; and (3) to present methods which have been suggested for the improvement of teaching in the area of social studies.

In the past ten years, teaching in the social studies has been criticized strongly for its slowness of change, its reluctance to practice the improved methods advocated by methods classes, its survey approach, its lack of emphasis on contemporary history, and the lack of vertical articulation in American history. The lack of emphasis on science in social studies texts has also been criticized, together with the over-emphasis on state and local history, the absence of the problems approach, and inadequate teacher preparation.

Few studies have been conducted to determine the effectiveness of social studies teaching methods. Those studies which have been made tend to show that methods such as the unit plan, individually oriented projects and research work are more effective than the conventional methods. The studies also show that the majority of teachers are not using these new methods to their fullest extent.

Several approaches have been suggested for the improvement of teaching in the social studies: the approach of the reflective teacher; the generalization of facts in order to provide a framework around which to organize material; the causal approach; the selection of material in terms of the immediate goals of the student; and the approach of a democratically oriented classroom.

Numerous methods have been suggested for the improvement of teaching in the social studies, among which are the use of literature such as novels and biography to

supplement units in history; the teaching of research techniques; doing original community research as a class; the conference method; current events through newspaper clippings; and testing for understanding.

The primary basis for the selection of teaching methods and procedures may ultimately be an intuitive one. Research does not yield a definite solution to the problem of improving social studies teaching methods. It may be concluded, that one of the principles which all teachers must keep in mind is that students cannot be expected to learn to be good world citizens and to think critically as a by-product of the study of the usual social studies content. They must be taught for direct transfer of concepts into action.